



# Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota

P.O. Box 308 • 39527 Reservation Highway 1

Morton, MN 56270

*Cansayapi Otunwe*

April 20, 2023

The Honorable Liz Olson, Chair  
Ways and Means Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Sent by electronic mail at: [rep.liz.olson@house.mn.gov](mailto:rep.liz.olson@house.mn.gov)

**RE: H.F. 1938 Omnibus Tax Bill, Article 12, Section 27 (Tribal Nation Aid)**

Dear Chair Olson:

Lower Sioux Indian Community in the State of Minnesota, a sovereign and federally recognized Indian tribe, writes to share our concerns about H.F. 1938 (introduced as H.F. 3068, Gomez), regarding Article 12, Section 27, the Tribal Nation Aid language in the House Omnibus Tax Bill.

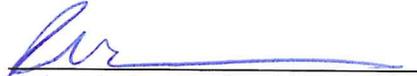
As you know, each of the eleven federally recognized Indian tribes are politically and legally distinct from one another. While each Tribe shares much in common with one another, especially our inherent tribal sovereignty, there are also many differences of need and interest among the Tribes. We each have different priorities, including legislative priorities. The bill does not equally distribute the aid. We believe sovereign status has nothing to do with population. We urge you to support an amendment that distributes the aid equally amongst the eleven Tribal Nations in Minnesota. We also urge you to add language that expressly states the bill is not attributable to reparations of tribal historical grievances, but is rather funding similar to other government aid distributed in this state.

Regarding H.F. 3068, we appreciate Representative Gomez's efforts to provide financial resources to those Tribal governments that continue to experience severe economic hardships and choose to accept such assistance from the State of Minnesota.

We respectfully suggest that H.F. 1938 recognize each Tribal Nation's independent sovereignty. To this end, the bill can be amended to delete the names of each Tribal Nation while maintaining the definition of "Tribal Nation" as being a federally recognized Indian Tribe. Further, the bill can include language that allows Tribes to "opt in" to receive any state aid provided under the bill. These amendments would clarify that the State would not assume a Tribal Nation is receiving state aid and further establishes a process for each Tribe to choose to affirmatively apply for the aid.

Again, we thank Representative Gomez for sincere efforts to consider the needs of the Tribal Nations and welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at Representative Gomez's convenience.

Pidamaya-do,



Robert L. Larsen, President

cc: Rep. Aisha Gomez at: [rep.aisha.gomez@house.mn.gov](mailto:rep.aisha.gomez@house.mn.gov)



**CONSERVATION  
MINNESOTA**

April 21, 2023

Chair Olson and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

**We write today to voice our support for the inclusion of the SCORE provision within HF1938, the House Tax Omnibus Bill, allocating an additional 5% of the Solid Waste Management Tax toward waste reduction.**

At Conservation Minnesota, our mission is to protect the people and the places that Minnesotans love. Capturing the environmental and economic benefits of recycling and waste reduction is central to this goal, and additional funding for Minnesota's SCORE grants helps achieve it.

In 1989, the Legislature adopted a set of recycling and waste reduction laws, known as SCORE, to effectively manage solid waste, emphasizing waste reduction, reuse, and recycling. The primary outcome of SCORE was the allocation of state funding (via the Solid Waste Management Tax) for grants to counties. SCORE became a pivotal part of recycling budgets, helping local communities manage waste, meet the state's recycling goals, and deal with hazardous waste. However, over time, SCORE grants have not kept up with needs, and a past administration redirected large portions of the Solid Waste Tax to the General Fund. Today, only 20% of Solid Waste Taxes go to support county SCORE grants, even as 30% or \$32.5 million per year is diverted to the General Fund.

The diversion of Minnesota's Solid Waste Management Tax away from SCORE grants limits every counties' ability to meet or surpass recycling goals and deliver key benefits from waste reduction. According to the MPCA, Minnesotans are still throwing away more than 850,000 tons of recyclables, with an estimated value of \$153 million. To turn the tide, our communities need to invest in infrastructure and program changes. But currently, counties are being left with significant funding gaps due to the Solid Waste Management Tax diversion. The partial inclusion of HF1785 within HF1938 takes a step toward fixing this diversion and redirects SCORE grants to counties to help pay for local recycling programs.

Programs to increase recycling and reduce waste are a vital aspect of protecting our environment and climate:

- Recycling and waste reduction programs save energy and reduce carbon emissions by avoiding the energy-intensive primary production of new products. According to the 2019 SCORE Report, Minnesota saves approximately 4.1 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year through recycling and waste management practices. This equates to removing annual emissions from 891,000 passenger vehicles.
- Waste reduction and recycling decreases the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators, limiting greenhouse gas emissions. Landfills are a major source of methane emissions. According to the MPCA, food that could otherwise be recycled through organics programs makes up 18% of landfills in Minnesota, where it produces methane gas with heat-trapping potential 25 times greater than carbon dioxide.
- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfills also mitigates the long-term costs, burdens, and risks created by landfill facilities. Even with new technology, landfills require maintenance for decades.

Finally, investing in SCORE is an effective way to create multiplying economic benefits for all Minnesota communities. According to the MPCA, recycling supports more than 60,000 jobs in our state, paying almost \$3.4 billion in wages and adding nearly \$15.7 billion to Minnesota's economy. Annually, Minnesota recycling programs collect approximately 2.5 million tons of material worth over \$690 million. Recycling these materials represents major economic opportunities, and developing local recycling markets keeps these opportunities in Minnesota.

For these reasons, we thank members and respectfully urge support for the continued inclusion of the updated Solid Waste Management Tax allocation in HF1938, the House Tax Omnibus Bill.

Sincerely,

**Nels Paulsen**, Policy Director

+1 (608) 469-5299

[nels@conservationminnesota.org](mailto:nels@conservationminnesota.org)

**David Pelikan**, Policy Associate

+1 (262) 685-7265

[david@conservationminnesota.org](mailto:david@conservationminnesota.org)

Chair Liz Olson  
House Ways & Means Committee  
479 State Office Building  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Soil and Water Conservation Aid Program in HF1938

April 19, 2023

Dear Chair Olson and Ways & Means Committee members,

As you consider HF1938, the Omnibus Tax bill, we write to convey our support for annual aid to Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) that is included in the bill for \$22,000,000 per year in FY24-25 and \$14,000,000 per year in subsequent years. SWCDs are essential partners in protecting and restoring Minnesota's waters, habitats, forests, and the resilience of Minnesota's agricultural lands. SWCDs provide essential services to landowners for land and water conservation across Minnesota. Stable, long-term funding for SWCDs is critical. We appreciate the committee is considering SWCD funding from the general fund through the creation of a local government aid program through the Dept. of Revenue.

SWCD staff engage directly with farmers, foresters, other local governments, and landowners to make cleaner water and healthier soils a reality by helping to:

- identify problems,
- provide technical assistance and design solutions,
- find financial support, and
- implement soil and water conservation projects and practices.

Given this vital role, we strongly believe that SWCDs need a stable, sufficient funding source. Consistency of funding is also crucial to allow SWCDs the ability to more deeply engage in long-term planning and relationship building. Time is a key element that is necessary to strategically pursue opportunities to advance conservation goals. Securing their funding through local government aid will:

- Increase stability and support a level of funding that will attract and retain qualified staff,
- Increase funding that can be used to implement projects,
- Leverage Federal and other matching dollars currently being left on the table, and
- Enhance clean water outcomes.

Through our work across Minnesota, we have seen the impact that SWCDs can have when their staff have the resources and relationships they need to be most effective. Ensuring they have a stable funding source will unlock their full potential and lead to the soil and water conservation outcomes we know are possible.

Thank you for your support of aid to SWCDs.

FRESHWATER



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The Nature  
Conservancy 